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Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session: implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Note verbale dated 19 November 2002 from the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and, with reference to its note verbale dated 24 September 2002, has the honour to forward the Berlin Charter (see annex), which summarizes the outcome of the Sixth European Regional Conference of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, held in Berlin in April 2002. The Mission would appreciate it if the Berlin Charter could be published as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 42 and 104.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 19 November 2002 from the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Berlin Charter

1. **We**, the European Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, assembled in Berlin in April 2002 to **determine** our priorities for the coming four years, **identify** the absolute urgency of addressing the vulnerabilities caused by international migration and by the deprivation of the right to health to increasing numbers of vulnerable people.

2. **We declare** our determination to bring particular attention to the needs of those whom migration has placed in special jeopardy: people living in the shadow of illegality, people excluded from health care access by definitions which discriminate against them and, most of all, the children whose futures are threatened by such discrimination.

3. **We reaffirm** the entitlement of every individual to enjoy basic human rights in accordance with international law. We will use our unique relationship with governments and civil society to advocate that these rights be extended to all new arrivals in our countries, regardless of their legal status. We want to ensure that those affected by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases are able, freely, to access appropriate care. We want to extend our assistance and protection to all those in need of it, in accordance with international humanitarian law, human rights law, tolerance and human dignity.

4. **We commit** ourselves and our dedicated and motivated volunteers and staff to take immediate and sustained action to address the human vulnerabilities arising from all forms of population movement, irrespective of the status of the individuals themselves, and to spare no effort to ensure that all people enjoy access to health care.

5. **We commit** ourselves to the implementation of the Plan of Action on Migration and on the Plan of Action on Health, in the knowledge that this requires us to redouble our efforts — domestically as well as internationally — to form partnerships and alliances that will generate the resources required, and to share knowledge and best practices.

6. **We commit** to communicating our message of promoting tolerance, non-violence in the community and respect for ethnic diversity and urge our governments to ensure respect for the basic rights of all persons present in our countries, without discrimination.

7. **We appeal** to our governments, **and call upon** international, regional and subregional organizations, to support us in our endeavours, and undertake to work with them to bring these concerns to the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in 2003.

HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES AND VULNERABILITIES

8. The profound transformations that have taken place in Europe as in other parts of the world, over the past decade, have given its peoples hope for a better future for

themselves and their children. At the same time, transformation has produced significant economic and social change, and increased vulnerability for large numbers of individual men, women and children. This has become visible through new forms of xenophobia and discrimination, new health problems and problems of separated families.

9. The Berlin Conference takes place at a time when the impact of international humanitarian action is seriously challenged by lack of respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law. There is a critical need for a reaffirmation of respect for, and trust in, the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, international humanitarian law, and human rights law as the starting points for reducing vulnerability and for protecting and assisting the most vulnerable.

10. New and old diseases cause widespread suffering while health and community services struggle to cope with increasing demand. The weakest among us continue to suffer the most. The European Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies recognize that these complex problems confront the whole world and are not specific to Europe. The world faces challenges which the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is uniquely placed to tackle. Armed conflict, natural disasters, and impoverishment caused by unequal economic and social change shatter the lives of large numbers of people.

CAPACITY

11. To achieve our goals in working on migration and health, we will ensure our National Societies' actions are responsive and focused and that we fully utilize the capacity and strength of our organizations. In our National Societies, we will foster a culture of inclusion.

12. We look to the Federation and its secretariat to support, in cooperation with the ICRC, our efforts to build our operational capacity, and pledge ourselves to intensify our own efforts in this field.

13. We will also use our global tracing network and our unique position in providing first aid, psychological support and emergency health to address the urgencies identified in this conference.

14. We commit ourselves to ensure well balanced participation in our organizations by people from all sectors of society, ensuring we reflect the culture of diversity of our communities and with particular emphasis on proper gender balance.

PARTNERSHIP

15. We will develop our action and advocacy in the interests of the most vulnerable in partnership with them, our governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector.

16. We expect our governments to fulfil the commitments they made by adopting the Plan of Action of the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and reaffirm our commitment to work constructively with them in the implementation of the Plan of Action.

17. We look to the secretariat of the Federation to initiate and develop, as appropriate, relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe and with other national and international humanitarian and technical organizations, including with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other regional and subregional organizations as well as non-governmental organizations.

REMAINING ENGAGED

18. We recognize that the real impact of the decisions made by the Sixth European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference will depend on remaining engaged through a process of follow-up, based on the spirit of partnership between National Societies and with our communities, governments, organizations and institutions that share our concerns. In this spirit we commit ourselves.

19. We pledge ourselves to practical action, working together and seeking partnership with governments and with national and international organizations. We will develop and implement our programmes in line with the Plans of Action of this Conference in relation to migration and in relation to health, guided by the agreed Follow-up Process.